SOLDIERS OF THE GAUNTLET

“GAUNTLET” \’gont-let\ *n* 1: a protective glove *2: an open challenge (as to combat) 3: a dress glove extending above the wrist

“Gauntlet” comes from the Middle French *gantelet,* the diminutive of *gant,* meaning “glove.” (The “gauntlet” meaning “ordeal” or “double file of armed men” is a different word of a different orgin.) Ultimately, *gant* is of Germanic orgin. “To throw down the gauntlet” means “to issue an open challenge.” “To pick up the gauntlet” means “to accept an open challenge.” These figurative phrases come from the conventions of medieval combat. The gauntlet was the glove of a suit of armor. To challenge someone to combat, a knight would throw his glove at another knight’s feet; the second knight would take it up if he intended to accept the challenge, in which case a jousting match might ensue.